

The Alaskan Way Viaduct & Seawall Replacement Project

09.06



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A Comparison of the Big Dig and the Alaskan Way Viaduct Project

Many people have heard about Boston's Central Artery/Tunnel Project, commonly referred to as "The Big Dig." The Big Dig project faced cost overruns, scope growth, and a prolonged construction schedule, among other issues.

While replacing the Alaskan Way Viaduct will be a major project, it is important to note that the Big Dig project was on a much larger scale. Boston's project was an eight-mile stretch with multiple tunnels and bridges. With either a cut-and-cover tunnel or an elevated structure, the length of affected highway is less than half of what was affected in Boston.

The Central Artery/Tunnel Project had two major components:

- Replacing the six-lane elevated highway with an eight-to-ten lane underground expressway, and two bridges totaling 14 lanes.
- Extending I-90 through a tunnel between South Boston and Boston Harbor to Logan Airport.

The project also had several engineering feats that exacerbated the risk for cost overruns and schedule delays:

- The 1.6 mile Ted Williams Tunnel goes underwater for three-quarters of a mile. At 90 feet below the surface of Boston Harbor, it is the deepest such connection in North America. No section of the cut-and-cover tunnel that is being considered for Seattle will go underwater.
- The project's seven-building ventilation system is one of the largest highway tunnel ventilation systems in the world.
- The Leonard P. Zakim Bunker Hill Bridge is the widest cable-stayed bridge in the world and the first hybrid design in the United States, using both steel and concrete.

Comparison of Lengths and Lane Miles Between AWW Alternatives and the Boston Central Artery Project

Highway length (miles)

| | |
|----------------------------------------|-----------|
| "The Big Dig" | 7.5 miles |
| SR 99 Cut-and-Cover Tunnel Alternative | 3.3 miles |
| SR 99 Elevated Structure Alternative | 3.3 miles |

Approximate Total Lane Miles

| | |
|----------------------------------------|-----------|
| "The Big Dig" | 160 miles |
| SR 99 Cut-and-Cover Tunnel Alternative | 40 miles |
| SR 99 Elevated Structure Alternative | 39 miles |

Roadway in Tunnel/Cut

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|------------|
| "The Big Dig" | 80 miles |
| SR 99 Cut-and-Cover Tunnel Alternative* | 11.9 miles |
| SR 99 Elevated Structure Alternative* | 3.2 miles |

*Includes Battery Street Tunnel

Roadway Structure

| | |
|----------------------------------------|------------|
| "The Big Dig" | 50 miles |
| SR 99 Cut-and-Cover Tunnel Alternative | 3.2 miles |
| SR 99 Elevated Structure Alternative | 17.1 miles |

Roadway At-grade

| | |
|----------------------------------------|------------|
| "The Big Dig" | 30 miles |
| SR 99 Cut-and-Cover Tunnel Alternative | 20.9 miles |
| SR 99 Elevated Structure Alternative | 18.8 miles |

A lane mile counts each lane of highway as a mile; so a section of highway one mile long with 5 lanes equals 5 lane miles.

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